Packing a Framed Two-Dimensional Object

Use these instructions to pack small framed objects no larger than 16" on any edge. Use other, more appropriate methods for packing and shipping larger framed objects.

First determine whether the framed item can be safely shipped by inspecting the item closely. Identify what it is, and determine that it and its frame are both in good condition.

Use this packing method for:
- Photographs, prints, watercolors, and oil paintings in good condition.
- Items framed with intact and whole glass or plexiglas, and that have no breaks or cracks as further damage may occur during shipping.
- Framed material transported by art carriers or expedited shipping services.

Do not use this packing method if the two-dimensional item:
- Has a frame with loose areas, mold, surface damage, flaking surfaces, torn support areas, or buckling of the support.
- Does not have a plexiglas or glass covering.
- Is a charcoal, pastel or soft pencil drawing. These materials are most vulnerable to loss or damage if their media are not "fixed."

Consult a conservator to determine media type or if you have concerns about safely shipping the framed item.

Packing the Object

Once you have determined that the item can be safely shipped, follow the steps noted below.

- Tape the glass or plexiglas surface, as glass or plexiglas breaks easily and can cause damage to the underlying surface (see figure 1). Taping reduces the possibility of the glass shattering and damaging the underlying object. Use a low-tack adhesive tape applied on the entire glass surface. Turn one end of the tape with adhesive surfaces together to form a pull tab for ease of removal.

Figure 1. Taping the glazing.

- Keep the object face up on the table on a sheet of glassine (or unbuffered tissue). Place the frame in the center of the glassine. Pull the edges of the glassine onto the object. If there is excess glassine fold towards the front. Do not use anything to secure the glassine closed (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Wrap the frame in glassine.

- Prepare the next protective layer. Cut 2 pieces of urethane foam and 2 pieces of multi-use corrugated board, measuring ½" larger than each side of the frame. When you have a deep frame, use packing materials to fill in the area so it is level with the top of the frame. Use a piece of urethane foam, polyester batting, or folded bubble wrap. Sandwich the glassine-wrapped frame between the urethane foam (see figure 3) and the multi-use corrugated board (see figure 4).

Figure 3. Sandwich the glassine-wrapped frame between urethane foam.

Figure 4. Sandwich the foam package between two layers of multi-use corrugated board.

- Secure all the layers together. Cut 1-1/2" wide strips of folder stock and extend around the edges of the stacked layers. Continue with the strips approximate 2"

on the top and underside of the multi-use corrugated board. Use masking tape to adhere the strips to the multi-use corrugated board. Turn one end of the masking tape with adhesive surfaces together to form a pull tab. Pull tabs are needed on the top side only. Place these strips on all four sides to prevent the stacked layers from shifting. If any side exceeds 12", additional strips will be added (see figure 5).
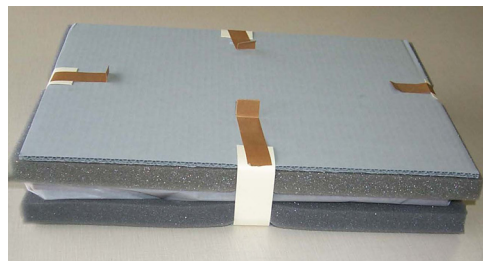

Figure 5. Use masking tape to adhere the folder stock strips to the multi-use corrugated board.

- Wrap in bubble wrap. Place the layered object in the middle of the bubble wrap. Pull the edges of the bubble wrap onto the object. Do not roll it onto the bubble wrap. Trim the excess or fold it under. Use masking tape to secure. Fold one end of the masking tape with adhesive surfaces together to form a pull tab. Tape an identification tag on top of the bubble wrap (see figure 6).

Figure 6. Tape an identification tag on top of the bubble wrap.

- Place the wrapped object in a box. Line

the box with 2" of urethane foam on all four sides and bottom. If there are void areas, fill with additional urethane foam and place a sheet of foam on top. Tape the flaps of the box closed.

Figure 7. Prepared frame in inner box.

- Place the prepared box into another box lined with 2" of urethane foam on all four sides and bottom. If there still are void areas, fill with additional urethane foam and place a sheet of foam on top. This process is called double boxing. This provides additional protection from shock and vibration (see figures 7 - 9).

Figure 8. Outer box prepared to receive inner box.

Figure 9. Double box the framed object.

- Enclose the appropriate paperwork. Seal the outer box with reinforced tape. Adhere at least three pieces of tape across the top of the box extending approximately 4-6" down each side (see figure 10).

Figure 10. Adhere with three pieces of tape across the top of the box.

Sources

Low-tack adhesive tape
Masterpak
145 East 57th Street
New York, NY 10022
(800) 922-5522; Fax (212) 586-6961
www.masterpak-usa.com

Glassine and folders are available in sheets and rolls
University Products
517 Main Street
Holyoke, MA 01041-0101
(800) 628-1912
www.universityproducts.com

Gaylord Brothers
P.O. Box 4901
Syracuse, NY 13221-4901
(800) 448-6160
www.gaylordmart.com

Urethane foam is available in sheets from local
packing supply companies or
Packaging Services Industries
16461 Elliott Parkway
Willliamsport, MD 21795
(800) 223-6255
www.psimd.com

References

NPS *Museum Handbook*, Part I, Chapter 6
"Handling, Packing and Shipping Museum
Objects."

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